EIL IN PRACTICE: INDONESIAN AND CHINESE INTERNATIONAL POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS NEGOTIATE MEANING

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Abstract: Interaction in English as an International Language (EIL) setting provides myriad opportunities for negotiation of meaning, arguably beneficial for language acquisition. The present study aims at finding out how meaning is negotiated in EIL interaction among two groups of postgraduate TESOL international students from two Asian countries, Indonesia and People's Republic of China (PR China). The findings reveal that the students indeed utilized various strategies such as clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, word-coinage, and use of approximation, self-repetition, other repetition, self-correction, and non-verbal expression of non-understanding. The relative frequency of strategies used appears to have been influenced by the interaction tasks. The variation of strategies across the three pairs is relatively similar. Some EIL features corresponding to pronunciation and grammatical structures also emerge in the present study. Finally, the study suggests that negotiation strategies need to be included in the English teaching syllabus. Moreover, current foreign or second language teaching methodology needs to pay serious attention to EIL features and to develop learners' intelligibility and communication strategies by making them aware of standard varieties of English.

Key words: EIL, negotiation of meaning, interaction, second language acquisition

Previous studies in interaction have focussed on interactions between native speakers (NSs) and non native speakers (NNSs) of English. Most of the studies have investigated how meaning is negotiated among adult learners. One study (Oliver, 1998) investigated whether children negotiate meaning as adults do. In addition to language proficiency, tasks, and setting of the interaction, gender was also taken into account (See Pica, Holliday, Lewis, Berducci, & Newman, 1991). Nevertheless, relatively few studies can be found in literature dealing with the interaction among students from different non-English-speaking-country backgrounds under the umbrella of English as an international language (EIL).

The present study investigates how two groups of non-native speakers (NNSs) of English communicate in English. In particular, it focuses on Indonesian international postgraduate students negotiating meaning with their PR Chinese counterparts. These are two groups which are numerically well represented in the postgraduate student population at a major Australian university's Faculty of Education. The possibility for these two groups of students to meet and interact is broadly open. Hence, it is interesting to see how the students make use of communication strategies in an attempt to reach mutual understanding.

Various studies (e.g., Gass & Varonis, 1994; Long, 1983; Loschky, 1994; Nakahama, Tyler & Lier, 2001; Oliver, 1998; Pica, 1987, 1989; Pica, Holliday, Lewis, Berducci & Newman, 1991; Pica, Holliday, Lewis & Morgenthaler, 1989; Pica, Young & Doughty, 1987; Varonis & Gass, 1985) have been conducted to investigate the role of interaction in second language acquisition (SLA). In particular, those studies focus on negotiation of meaning, "exchanges between learners and their interlocutors as they attempt to resolve communication breakdowns" (Pica et al, 1989:65). Empirically, negotiation of meaning, according to Pica (1987), likely provides interlocutors the opportunity to reach mutual understanding. In SLA theory, there are three crucial components that help learners acquire second language (L2): comprehensible input, comprehensible output, and feedback (Long, 1996; Pica, 1992). These can be facilitated through social interaction between learners and their interlocutors in which the negotiation of meaning occurs. Through the interaction, the received input is manipulated by the learner and, therein, language learning basically occurs (Gass, 1997). In accordance with this, Pica et al. (1987) reveal that face to face NS-NNS interaction aids input comprehension. The same result is also found in NNS-NNS interactions (Varonis & Gass, 1985).

This comprehensible input then leads to the production of output as found in the NS-NNS interaction (Pica, 1989). When producing an utterance, a speaker might be subject to his or her interlocutor's request for clarification if that utterance is incomprehensible. This request, also called 'negative feedback', pushes the speaker to modify his utterances into new language forms and structures. In other words, in order to be comprehensible, the output has to be semantically and structurally modified and adjusted with the help of feedback between interlocutors (Pica et al., 1991). Therefore, Swain (1995) posited that this push to output may possibly aid learners in SLA, assisting the acquisition of syntax and morphology in particular.

Furthermore, in discussing communication strategies, Canale and Swain (1980:30) defined strategic competence as 'verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that may be called into action to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to performance variables or to insufficient competence.' As part of communicative competence, communication strategies (CSs) are considered to be pertinent to communicative language use and CLT (Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, & Thurrell, 1995). Tarone (1981) has asserted that 'communication strategies have an interactional function, as they are used for a joint negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer' (p.285). A variety of CSs come into play during an interaction. Such strategies as approximation, mime, and circumlocution are called into action to bridge the discrepancy of language competence among the interlocutors (Tarone, 1981), that is, to avoid communication breakdowns caused by limitations in linguistic knowledge (Canale & Swain, 1980). Another set of strategies: e.g. comprehension checks, clarification requests, confirmation checks – phrased as 'strategies and tactics' (Long, 1983, p.138) – including elaborations, repetitions, and corrections are utilized by speaker/hearer for negotiation of meaning and comprehensible input achievement (see, e.g., Gass, 1997; Lee, 2001; Long, 1983; Oliver, 1998; Pica, 1987, 1989; Pica & Doughty, 1985; Varonis & Gass, 1985). In addition, non verbal expressions such as 'raised eyebrows' and 'blank looks' are employed by the interactants to indicate non/misunderstanding (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995:28).

Specifically, *foreigner talk* like elaborations, repetitions as well as corrections, are often used by NSs for input comprehensibility (Varonis & Gass, 1985). NNSs, conversely, are inclined to employ such negotiation strategies as comprehension checks, clarification requests, and confirmation checks when interacting with NSs or with one another (Lee, 2004; Long, Inagaki & Ortega,

1998). For instance, if what a speaker has expressed is not clear, a listener will request clarification through wh-questions, yes/no questions, such statements as 'I don't follow, Try again' (Long, 1983:137). Also, to find out whether or not the prior expression has been understood by the listener, a speaker will employ comprehension checks by using question tags, intonation-risen repetition, and questions such as 'Right?' and 'Do you understand? (Long, 1983:136).

The concept of EIL itself is relatively new. Llurda (2004:316) asserts that the term EIL refers to "most of the current uses of English worldwide, especially in those situations involving non-native speakers interacting in English both with native speakers and other non-native speakers." Kachru (1985:12) proposed 'three concentric circles of world Englishes' – *the inner circle*, *the outer circle* or *extended circle*, *the expanding circle*. The inner circle includes countries like USA, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand where English is used as a native language; the outer circle or extended circle consists of, for instance, Nigeria, Singapore, and India where English is used as an official language; the expanding circle covers such countries as China, Indonesia, Greece, Korea, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, and Zimbabwe, in which English is used as a foreign language. Regarding this, Seidlhofer (2005:1) has defined EIL as the 'uses of English within and across Kachru's 'Circles', for intranational as well as international communication'.

The global use of English has in fact resulted in a range of standard varieties of English. Jenkins (2006:42) has posited that 'local linguistic and cultural influences have affected the way [English] is spoken in its different L2 locations around the world: its characteristic accents, its syntactic structures, its lexis, its pragmatic features, and the like'. Specifically, phonology is very crucial in sustaining communication between L2 speakers whose L1 varies between one another (Jenkins, 2004). Research on ELF interactions among different L1 speakers (e.g., Jenkins, 2000) found that the 'th' sound is often dropped and substituted with 's', 'z', 't', or 'd'; aspiration of word-initial voiceless stops /p/, /t/, and /k/ is pronounced similar to /b/, /d/, and /g/. In terms of grammatical structures, Seidlhofer's (2003) study revealed that (1) the third person present tense – s is dropped; (2) the use of relative pronouns *who* and *which* is often incorrect; (3) definite and indefinite articles are omitted and put in utterance(s) improperly; and (4) Expressing explicitness is overdone (e.g. *black colour* instead of *black*).

This research aims at finding out how Indonesian international postgraduate students negotiate meaning with their international colleagues, particularly

PR Chinese international students enrolled in the same programs of study. Utilizing two elicitation tasks, free conversation and information gap activities, this research more specifically seeks to identify the sorts of communication strategies that the students utilize during their interaction. Thus, it intends to answer: (1) what strategies students use to negotiate meaning in their interactions, (2) whether the strategies used are influenced by the interaction task, and (3) whether and how the strategies used vary in type and frequency.

METHOD

Participants

This qualitative research was carried out in the Faculty of Education at a major university in Australia, and involved six Asian students from two different countries. They were chosen to represent English users from two expanding circle countries, PR China and Indonesia. Aged between 22 and 38 years old, they were studying a postgraduate program in TESOL International and had already resided in Australia for about six months. They were at relatively similar levels of English language ability, as to be enrolled in the program they had to meet a certain level of proficiency on the International English Language Testing System – IELTS. From this condition, it could be inferred that the ways they would see and cope with everyday conversation in English would be fairly equivalent. The participants were chosen purposively through personal networks by initially inviting all international postgraduate TESOL students known to researcher who are either fellow Indonesians or from mainland China to take part in the research. The first 6 students (3 from each country) who agreed to participate were selected.

Procedures for Data Collection

This data elicitation was accomplished in two weeks: the first and second interactions were performed in week 1; whilst the third interaction was conducted a week later. At the onset of data collection, I asked the participants to give some background information by completing a questionnaire and handing it to the researcher. The questionnaire aimed to reveal participants' personal information, excluding their name, such as age, gender, nationality, first language, and length of time residing in Australia. It also intended to find out what

language they mostly used in Australia as well as what most recent IELTS speaking score they had achieved (optional). The participants were then paired with a student from another language background (i.e. Indonesian or Chinese) and assigned to three different dyads. The pairings did not necessarily take into account the participants' gender and age.

The dyads were asked to separately perform two types of interaction, the information gap and free conversation interactions, which each lasted more or less ten to twelve minutes respectively. In the first task, the participants were asked to talk about their common experiences pertaining to studying at Monash and living in Melbourne, including sharing their mutual interests. They were encouraged to build a common ground with one another by exchanging their information. In the second task, the dyads were required to completed *a spot-the-difference task* taken from Ur (1981:55). Prior to commencing the activity, the participants were notified that there were no less than five differences in the pictures. They were not allowed to have a look at each other's picture and, if necessary, they could circle the differences but did not need to jot them down. The dyads were both video- and audio-recorded while engaging in the two activities to capture the occurrence of meaning negotiation strategies for data analysis. The utilization of the two different tasks was intended to reveal how these tasks influence the use of strategies during interaction.

Procedures for Data Analysis

Each recorded conversation was transcribed mainly referring to the transcription conventions of casual conversation developed by Eggins and Slade (1997). Once the transcriptions were ready, the negotiation strategies were identified and classified referring to those defined by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), Pica and Doughty (1985), and Tarone (1980); these consist of nine categories: *comprehension checks, clarification requests, confirmation checks, word coinage, use of approximation, self repetition, other repetition, correction,* and *non-verbal expression of non-understanding*. The video-recorded data were used to identify the non verbal strategies employed by the interlocutors. Subsequently, each strategy used by the participants in both elicitation tasks was coded and listed into a suitable category or subcategory, which served as the basis for subsequent data analysis.

FINDINGS

The students utilized a variety of communication strategies in their interactions for negotiation of meaning (see Table 1). In order of frequency, the strategies consisted of other repetition, confirmation checks, self-repetition, self-correction, clarification requests, use of approximation, comprehension checks, and non-verbal expression of non-understanding, as well as word coinage. The use of other repetition occurred very often, reaching 27.39% of the total percentage of the strategies used. The students also used a great proportion of confirmation checks (26.09%) followed by self-repetition (15.22%). The utilization of self-correction (11.30%) appeared to be barely greater than of clarification requests (10.43%) and use of approximation (3.91%). In addition, the participants utilized a smaller proportion of comprehension checks and non-verbal expression of non-understanding, 2.61% and 2.17% respectively. Finally, word coinage was used sparingly, only 0.87% in amount.

Table 1. Number of Times and Percentage of Negotiation Strategies Used

Type of Strategy	Number of Times	Percentage
Other repetition	63	27.39
Confirmation checks	60	26.09
Self-repetition	35	15.22
Self-correction	26	11.30
Clarification requests	24	10.43
Use of approximation	9	3.91
Comprehension checks	6	2.61
Non-verbal expression of non-understanding	5	2.17
Word coinage	2	0.87
	n= 230	100

More than half of the total strategies were used in information gap activity. In other word, the participants utilized a smaller amount of strategies in free conversation activity. In detail, the most significant distinction went to the proportion of use of other repetition which occurred 23.04% in the second task, whilst only 4.34% cropped up in the first task. Another strategy, confirmation checks, appeared only 8.70% of the time in the first task, which was almost half the number found (17.39%) in the second task. The students also em-

ployed more clarification requests (6.96%) in the second task than in the first one (3.48%). Overall, the utilization of interactional strategies occurred more frequently in the information gap activity than in the free conversation task. These differences give evidence for the fact that the use of the strategies was influenced by the tasks. The findings seem to show that the information gap activity provides students with more opportunity for negotiation of meaning than the free conversation task does. This is so, according to Pica, Kanagy & Falodun (1993:21), because an information gap task, *Spot the difference* in particular, requires both interlocutors to 'work together toward a convergent goal and single outcome'.

Table 2. The Proportion of Negotiation Strategies Used by the Students in Free Conversation and Information Gap Activities

Type of Strategy	Free Conversation	Percentage	Information Gap	Percentage
Other repetition	10	4.34	53	23.04
Confirmation checks	20	8.70	40	17.39
Self-repetition	17	7.39	18	7.83
Self-correction	14	6.09	12	5.22
Clarification requests	8	3.48	16	6.96
Use of approximation	3	1.30	6	2.61
Comprehension checks	2	0.87	4	1.74
Non-verbal expression of non-understanding	1	0.43	4	1.74
Word coinage	-	-	2	0.87
	n= 75	32.60	n= 155	67.40

By and large, the distribution of communication strategies used by each pair appears to be relatively equivalent across the two interaction tasks. In the first task, pair 3 employed the largest amount of negotiation strategies, while pair 1 used the least. Interestingly, the strategies used by pair 3 in the information gap activity were not as many as for the other two pairs. All pairs tended to use a greater number of strategies in the information gap activity than in the free conversation task. This indicated that the dyads were indeed triggered to use various modification devices as they interacted in the information gap task. In general, all the pairs relied heavily on the use of other repetition, con-

firmation checks, and self-repetition to negotiate meaning as well as to avoid communication breakdowns. Except in the case of pair 1, such strategies as non-verbal expression of non-understanding and word coinage were not used at all by the pairs.

Table 3. Variation of Negotiation Strategies Used by Different Pairs in Free Conversation and Information Gap Tasks

Type of Strategies	**Pair 1**	**%**	**Pair 2**	**%**	**Pair 3**	**%**
Free Conversational Tasks	**M-K**		**N-H**		**S-W**	
Other repetition	3	15.7	1	4.35	6	18.18
Confirmation checks	7	9	4	17.39	9	27.27
Self-repetition	1	36.8	6	26.09	10	30.30
Self-correction	2	4	8	34.78	4	12.12
Clarification requests	4	5.26	2	8.70	2	6.06
Use of approximation	-	10.5	1	4.35	2	6.06
Comprehension checks	1	3	1	4.35	-	
Non-verbal expression of non-	1	21.0	-		-	
understanding	-	5	-		-	
Word coinage						
		5.26				
		5.26				
Total	19		23		33	
Information Gap Activity						
Other repetition	12	22.64	32	59.26	9	18.75
Confirmation checks	17	32.08	10	18.52	13	27.08
Self-repetition	6	11.32	7	12.96	5	10.42
Self-correction	6	11.32	1	1.85	5	10.42
Clarification requests	2	3.77	2	3.70	12	25.00
Use of approximation.	1	1.89	1	1.85	4	8.33
Comprehension checks	3	5.66	1	1.85	-	
Non-verbal expression of non-	4	7.55	-		-	
understanding	2	3.77	-		-	
Word coinage						
Total	5		5		4	
	3		4		8	

DISCUSSION

Negotiation Strategies

Conversational adjustment like clarification requests, confirmation checks, and comprehension checks were more available in the information gap activity than in the free conversation task. Among these features, confirmation checks were the most frequently-used strategies in both tasks. However, comprehension checks were few in number either in the free conversation or the information gap activity. The greater percentages of conversational adjustments in the information gap activity indicated that the participants did exchange more input in this task. Information in the spot-the-difference task was something new to them. Each member of the pairs held some dissimilar types of information to be shared with their fellow partner; that is, they had to work together to find out some differences in each other's pictures. Thus, the input they received from their conversational partner tended to be incomprehensible. Realizing this condition, the students made efforts to make the input comprehensible by utilizing conversational adjustments. In the free conversation task, the participants discussed topics which were relatively familiar to them. They were not required to achieve one similar outcome along the interaction. In such a situation, prospects for comprehension and negative feedback were increasingly reduced.

It was also found that self- and other repetitions were quite abundant in both free conversation and information gap activities. Nevertheless, the occurrence of these two features was significantly greater in the information gap activity than in the free conversation task. This suggested that interactional modifications did take place in the information gap task. The participants seemed to self-repeat to show their commitment to completing the task. Repetition of other utterance(s) was a sort of feedback given by the participants in response to their conversational partners' expressions as a means of maintaining the flow of interaction.

The appearance of self-correction was also more plentiful in the information gap activity compared to the free conversation task. The participants self-corrected in an attempt to modify output. This type of strategy is assumed to be vital in SLA as it helps to bridge the gap between learner's interlanguage and the target language. The strategy also provides learners with more opportu-

nities for learning and comprehension. In the present study it was revealed that the information gap activity motivated the participants to do self-repair.

The information gap activity also forced the participants to use approximation and invent words to help express their idea. The participants, when exchanging the information they held with their conversational partner, had to name various things in the picture with certain words. This was a difficult thing to do due to the fact that they had limitations in both vocabulary mastery and time availability. Therefore, it sometimes ended up in a situation where they had to use approximation or invent a new word to pass on the information, avoiding communication breakdowns. These types of strategy were used occasionally in the free conversation task. The topic and setting of this task were inclined to be casual and familiar to the participants. In this activity, it was seen that the participants could play with the topic and use a variety of vocabulary items, especially those which are familiar to them.

The present study also found that the information gap activity also triggered the participants to employ more non verbal expression of non understanding than the free conversation task did. The same reason for the above two strategies also underlay the utilization of this strategy. When the participants could not really express their non understandings verbally, they used their body language such as *raised eyebrow*s and *a blank look*.

In spite of the above evidences, the present study revealed that the free conversation task indeed contained some positive features, which to some extent are superior to those in the information gap activity. The features included *length of turns, complexity of utterances, and tenses shift.* Regarding these three features, conversation activity is argued to provide learners with more complex input, which pushes the production of more complex output (Nakahama et al., 2001). Although not measured quantitatively, turns produced by the participants in the free conversation activity were relatively longer than those in the information gap activity. Swain (1985) has asserted that pushed output in the form of longer utterances is required to facilitate learners in language acquisition. Thus, the current evidence suggested that the free conversation task likely furnishes the opportunity for pushed output to appear. In terms of complexity, the utterances produced in the free conversation task appeared to be more complex compared to those in the information gap activity. Nakahama et al. (2001) posited that 'longer utterances often, but not necessarily, result in more complex morphology and syntax' (p.391). Free conversation activity also provides the participants with the chance to make shifts in tense.

The default tense of the participants was the present tense. The participants were able to shift from one tense to another as they negotiated meaning in the free conversation task. For instance, they could correctly use future tense to express future activity. To tell their previous experiences, they utilized past or present perfect tenses.

Some Characteristics of EIL interaction

Asian students, Chinese and Indonesian in particular, share key characteristics. Si-Qing (1990) has stated several characteristics of Chinese learners. First, according to her, most of them are strongly industrious. They are eager to devote their time and energy in order to be better and successful learners. Second, they are not accustomed to take a risk, that is, they are afraid of making mistakes. They will not talk if they are not sure. In other words, 'they would rather keep on saying something they feel certain than try anything new' (Si-Qing, 1990:173). The recurrent utilization of repetition in the present study might relate to these characteristics. In addition to avoid communication breakdown, that is to open the communication channel, the use of repetition serves as a mean of showing politeness and avoiding feelings of embarrassment (Si-Qing, 1990). The use of repetition is one of the characteristics of EIL interactions among different L1 speakers. This is a means of overcoming misinterpretation (Seidlhofer, 2004).

In the present study, the participants, particularly Chinese students, hardly ever utilized non-verbal strategy to express non-understanding. This might be correlated to the fact that in Chinese culture, regular use of gestures or body language in a conversation is considered impolite (Si-Qing, 1990). As far as I know, there is no cultural reason that discourages the use of gestures in Indonesian culture. Thus, the strategy appeared very little in the current study and was used mostly by Indonesian participants.

In many cases, Indonesian participants made no distinction when pronouncing the /th/ and /t/ sounds in *think,* for instance. This might be explained by the fact that in *Bahasa Indonesia*, there is no /th/ sound: thus they pronounced it in a similar way to the /t/ sound. It was also found that the /t/ sound is frequently uttered like /d/. Interestingly, in one case, unintelligibility in pronunciation was proved to cause communication breakdown. This happened when a Chinese participant pronounced the word *calendar* which sounded unclear to her conversational partner. This was so perhaps because it was influ-

enced by her L1 accent, as Jenkins (2006) has reminded us that the L1 accent may have an effect on the way EIL is spoken.

In a few cases, the third person singular – s was dropped by the participants as shown in sentence *John teach night class* and *The teacher always emphasize that*. A previous study of EIL interaction conducted by Seidlhofer (2003) revealed the same finding. This type of phenomenon, according to her, characterizes EIL communication among NNSs.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusions

The major findings obtained from the data in terms of research questions addressed by the present study can be summarized as follows. First, the participants did exchange a variety of communication strategies as they negotiated toward mutual understanding. The strategies comprised clarification requests, confirmation checks, comprehension checks, word-coinage, use of approximation, self-repetition, other repetition, self-correction, and non-verbal expressions of non-understanding. The strategies used in both communicative tasks were found to vary according to the proportion of use. More than half of the total percentage of strategies was employed by the students in the information gap activity. The results suggested that this type of task provided the participants with a greater opportunity for negotiation of meaning than the free conversation activity did. They were forced to utilize a greater frequency of communication strategies during the interaction. Therefore, it could be concluded that this interaction task did stimulate the occurrence of strategies used by the participants.

In spite of the above evidence, it was found that the utterances produced in the free conversation task were inclined to be longer and more complex than those in the information gap activity. In addition, this type of task allowed the participants to call into action a variety of tenses, shifting from one tense to another. These findings also indicated that free conversation task indeed promoted learning and pushed the production of output. Furthermore, the variation of strategies in terms of type and frequency used by each pair was relatively similar. Such strategies as other repetition, confirmation checks, and self repetition were found to be more abundantly used by all pairs than the other strategies were.

Finally, some interesting features pertaining to communicating in English as an international language (EIL) appeared in this study. For instance, in many cases, the participants were inclined to pronounce the /th/ sound in similar ways to the /t/ sound. Moreover, the participants, Chinese students in particular, tended to do self- and other repetitions, which were assumed to be part of Chinese students' characteristics (Si-Qing, 1990). The repetition strategy is purposively used by different L1 speakers to prevent communication breakdowns when engaging in EIL interaction.

Suggestions

The previously proposed theoretical framework of communicative competence (See Bachman, 1990; Canale, 1983; Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia et al.,1995) recommends that English language pedagogy should facilitate learners to acquire at least four areas of competence, that is, linguistic competence, discourse competence, pragmatic competence, and strategic competence. By acquiring these competences, the learners of English are assumed to be able to cope with everyday authentic interactions. The present study centralized its investigation on how two groups of international students with different L1 background negotiate meaning in EIL interaction using communication strategies, which are part of strategic competence. Knowing and practising these strategies will boost students' confidence to speak and interact in various real life occasions because communication strategies can be used as alternative devices of conveying meaning due to limitation of knowledge in the target language. Through the interaction, students are able to express their message as well as receive feedback or input, and negotiate meaning with the help of communication strategies. This process of negotiation of meaning is believed to enhance learners' language knowledge. As researcher I argue that the current English syllabus design, particularly in my home country, offers English learners comparatively insufficient materials or practical knowledge dealing with negotiation strategies. Based on the findings, the present study recommends that syllabus design should put negotiation strategies as part of the syllabus, which later can be used by teachers as a guideline for teaching English in classroom.

Language testing is one of the most crucial components in English language pedagogy. Testing language is aimed to, among all, find out how far learners of English gain achievement toward what they have already learned.

This test must be able to measure both student's performance and competence, or what Bachman (1990) called *communicative language ability*. Thus, the four areas of language skill – speaking, listening, reading, and writing – have to be assessed all together. Therefore, it is recommended that negotiation strategies as the core of the present study are worth being included among items for speaking assessment.

The most popular teaching methodology, which is currently used around the world for English as foreign or second language pedagogy, is so-called *communicative language teaching* (CLT). This type of teaching method is argued to be superior to those previously proposed, e.g., *grammar translation method*, *audio-lingual method*. In CLT, English learners are often supposed to speak English accurately and fluently based on the social context, like native speakers of English: American, British, or Australian. In EIL context, where English is mostly used as a medium of communication among speakers from different first linguistic and cultural backgrounds, to be like native speakers is no longer a must and, hence, the aim of teaching English should be directed to prepare the students to interact with people from all over the globe, namely, speakers whose L1 are often not English. In accordance with this, McKay (2002) has suggested that the goal of teaching English should ensure intelligibility and not merely insist on correctness, and aid learners to build up interaction strategies. The English learners must be informed to be aware of standard varieties of English which may be different from its country of origin, especially in terms of pronunciation and grammatical features as found in the present study.

The present study involved a small number of participants from two different L1 backgrounds, Indonesian and Chinese. In order to obtain more meticulous results, the involvement of more diverse participants is strongly suggested for further study. The participants' gender and cultural identity also needs to be taken into account in future study. The researcher believes that gender and culture may have a significant influence on the way EIL background interlocutors negotiate meaning for mutual understanding and on how they cope with communication breakdowns. Further research in EIL interactions could also be expanded to, for instance, formal conversations between teachers and trainees. It would be interesting to investigate how international teachers from China teach English in an Indonesian classroom or vice-versa. A similar study may also be focused on how international students negotiate meanings with their international fellows in the classroom context. A similar study in the future is al-

so recommended to apply both quantitative and qualitative methods. The combination of these two techniques will make the results of the study more convincing.

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APPENDIX:

A. Background Questionnaire

Date: …/…./…..

Instruction:
Please give your answer by filling in the space or by ticking (√) the square [ ] against the answer you select for each question.

1. Age:
2. Gender:
   - Male
   - Female
3. Nationality:
4. First Language:
5. How long have you been in Australia?

   …….years ……months
6. Language mostly used while in Australia (in order of frequency)

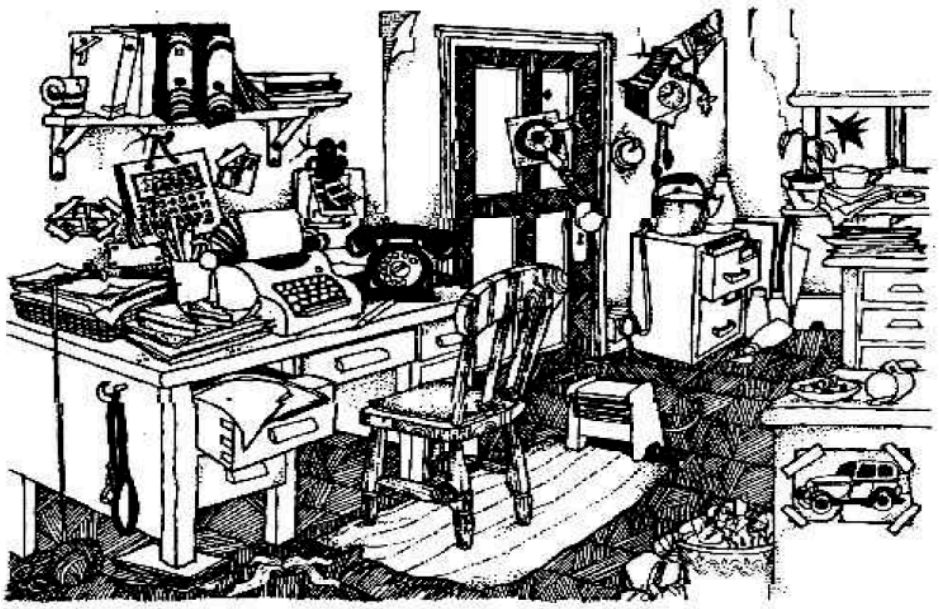
   a……

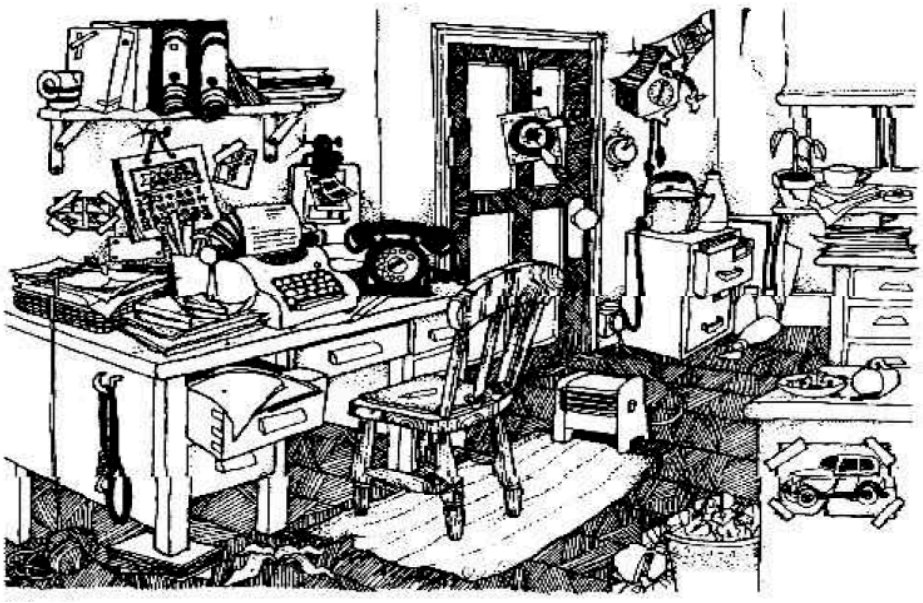
   b…….
7. English learning background (in years):
   a. Elementary: ……
   b. Secondary : ……
   c. Tertiary : ……
   d. Other : ……

8. Most recent IELTS speaking band score (optional):
9. Prior experiences (teaching, translating, etc.) in English-related fields:
   a. ……..length of time ……..years
   b. ……..length of time ……..years

Adapted from *Strategies Used by EFL-background Students to Avoid Communication Breakdowns*, by Sukono, 2003, Masters Thesis. Monash University.

B. Task for Information Gap Activity





Taken from *Discussions That Work: Task-Centered Fluency Practice,* by P. Ur, 1990, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.